

## Preface to the Expanded Edition

Some years ago I was foolhardy enough to contemplate a book about growing one's own food in Hong Kong, a city renowned for its surfeit of concrete and its plethora of eating venues to suit every taste and pocket. Surely I would be sowing seed on stony ground. After plunging headlong nonetheless, I had no choice but to sit back to await results. Well, I was amazed by the number of people who admitted stirrings of their latent gardening juices, responding to my message that growing your own food, even in the smallest way, is more than just planting a few seeds—it is a way of life. The greatest surprise was the number of start-ups among people who had no previous experience of growing anything: most have expressed delight in their new venture. Another unexpected turn of events was the interest generated among gardeners outside of Hong Kong. It seems the book has proved useful to gardeners in those areas around the world with subtropical climates similar to ours. This was indeed an interesting development.

I have also been pleasantly surprised when approached by total strangers, from the humblest to the grandest, who want to talk about growing food. The exchange is often two-way: many passers-by, gardeners themselves or who had been farmers in days past, have added to my knowledge of growing vegetables, which often involves the swapping of seeds, plants and opinions. While growing flowers and ornamental shrubs has always been a genteel pastime, the growing of food was thoughtlessly left to the faceless, seldom-regarded, lowly-paid grunts known as farmers. All that mattered was for food to appear in the markets or on shop shelves, neatly packaged but from where we know not. It may not be generally known that fully one-third of all food produced ends up as garbage. We are sorely in need of a change of mindset.

Despite some alterations and additions, this 2015 revision does not alter the structure or the tone of the book in any way. My message also remains unchanged: to cultivate a garden is to harvest knowledge. Discover the miracle of life.

Arthur van Langenberg (2014)